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ABSTRACT

A study of the syntactic development of discourse in and after adolescence among fluent English speakers in a bilingual community of East Los Angeles focused on subordinate devices not observed until adolescence, such as the relative clause using "which" and clauses using "even though/although." Discourse analysis of these types of clauses revealed that they are symptomatic of the continuing development of strategies for organizing clause-size information units in speech beyond childhood. It is suggested that use of the defining relative ("which") clause awaits development of orientation in narrative and other discourse and depends on learners being able to recognize pragmatic implications of the clauses being commented on by the "which" clause. The case for "even though/although" clauses is not as clear, and although their appearance is much less frequent in this group, they also appear suddenly in adolescence. It is concluded from this analysis and previous research that these clauses provide evidence that in some respects adolescents are faster language learners than preadolescents, but that problems remain in accounting for this advantage to older second language learners with respect to the extent to which cognitive vs. stylistic features are involved in the late age of emergence of the devices. (MSE)

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SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE SYNTACTIC DEVELOPMENT OF DISCOURSE BEYOND CHILDHOOD.

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1. Introductory remarks. A growing body of literature, mostly of a quantitative and experimental nature, indicates that much linguistic development continues beyond preadolescence. The present article complements these studies with qualitative evidence for the adolescent emergence of particular types of adverbial clauses, based on analysis of the spontaneous extended speech behavior of 46 preadolescent and 50 adolescent and adult fluent English speakers from the bilingual community of Greater East Los Angeles. The following are examples of two key constructions (among many subordinating devices) not observed in the community until adolescence.

(1) a. That's my favorite part of the house even though I don't like to cook. (PL17fG2)

b. But yk (=y'know) sometimes I feel sorry for people that don't have that much money, which we don't have that much money either yk. We're middle class, right? (JP17mG3)

Example (1)a. contains a concessive clause introduced by the conjunctive phrase even though. Example (1)b. looks like some type of nonrestrictive relative clause. But which introduces a canonical clause. Furthermore, the NP "antecedent" alone is not the head of the relative clause - the entire predicate is.

In examining the use of these clause types in discourse, it becomes evident that they are symptomatic of the continuing development of strategies for organizing clause-size information units in speech beyond childhood. Final discussion will consider the extent to which the growing elaboration of social discourse influences the differential rate at which younger and older speakers acquire productive use of meaningful elements of a second language.

2. The Community. The speakers of concern in this paper are all members of the East LA community. The community is largely characterized by a low adult educational level, working or lower SES, and 95-98% Mexican American ethnicity. It is a complex bilingual community where members range from monolingual Spanish to monolingual English with every type of known individual bilingualism in between represented. Despite this diversity of types of bilingualism, there is a high degree of patterning of types by age on arrival and/or generation. This patterning is suggested by such surveys as have been done on the community (and other urban Hispanic communities), and by ethnographic observations, and is reflected in the samples discussed in this paper (cf. Veltman 1982, Lopez 1978, Thompson 1974): 1. virtual Spanish monolingualism is found in adulthood only among speakers arriving at mid adolescence at the earliest; 2. virtual English monolingualism from childhood becomes common in the third generation. Fluent Spanish speakers are hard to find among this generation. Generally English monolingualism is associated with homes in which

parents and other care-givers use English with each other and with their children. This is common practice if both parents were born in the community; 3. Bilingualism is a relative term expressing more than minimal competence in both languages. English is the usual language of communication if the speaker came as a child, i.e. before adolescence, and the interlocutor can speak English.

Speakers of the second and third generation, whether bilingual or monolingual are used to define the English vernacular of the community. In terms of syntax there is little difference between these two generations, or between the English vernacular of this community and the vernaculars of monolingual English communities. Despite the high degree of residential segregation of the community from non-Mexican American communities, evidence for creolization or transfer from Spanish is much less than the popular stereotype of US Hispanic communities might lead one to expect.

3. Methodological Issues. My main interest in this paper is to explore the development of discourse through the functions of the late-emerging which and though clauses in discourse. This necessarily requires the investigation of speech behavior. It goes without saying that experiments involving comprehension are essential to probing the evidence for language acquisition, and there are no theoretical limits to the insight that can be gained from the use of such research strategies. Still, there is much evidence that the relationship between production and comprehension is complex. Facts which require explanation are immediately discoverable through the investigation of production.

To illustrate the problematic relation of comprehension to production, let's compare some data reported by Scholnick & Wing (1981) on age-grading in the comprehension of experimentally designed complex sentences containing although and if ± "subjunctive" (i.e. past modals) by middle class English monolinguals in Maryland, with the production of the same sentence types by preadolescent and older speakers in East LA. Table 1 below shows age-grading from the S&W study in deviations from interpretation of the sentences according to the expected adult norms.

	if ± sjn (S&W:473) (belief)	although (S&W:469) ("neg entailment")
Age (years)		
9	47	31
11	35	09
19	06	01

Table 1. Adaptation of age-grading in Scholnick & Wing's (1981) data for adult-inappropriate responses to comprehension of if ± sjn ("counterfactual") and although.

N.B. if ± sjn: an inappropriate response to, e.g. if these were number 70 rocks, they would have palium. would indicate that the "astronaut" believes that they are number 70 rocks and/or they do have palium. Appropriate responses are that the "astronaut" does not believe either

of these, or is uncertain.

although: an inappropriate response to, e.g. although this is a number 82 rock, it has rubium. would indicate that the "astronaut" believes that most 82 rocks have rubium or he's not sure. An appropriate response is that he believes most 82 rocks DON'T have rubium (hence, "negative entailment").

Notice in particular that comprehension of although clauses appears to develop more quickly than comprehension of if + sjn. These comprehension observations bear no obvious relation to the production results from the spontaneous speech of the East LA speakers shown in Table 2 below.

Age	THO	WCH	CF	N
10-12	00	00	31	46
16-50	24	24	54	50

Table 2. Percentage of speakers observed using the indicated conjunctions in spontaneous speech by age group. (N=total number of speakers. THO = concessive clause: although/even though, WCH = which clause, CF = "counterfactual", i.e. if + past modal.)

If any inferences can be drawn from these two tables, it's that lack of occurence in speech is not an indication of lack of comprehension. The question remains why THO and WCH clauses emerge late in speech.

4. The discourse development of syntax. At this point let's consider the discourse development of the syntactic constructions at issue in this paper, starting with the which clause.

The relative clause, as a whole, is a good example of the interaction of discourse with syntax, particularly in its non-specifying functions, the less frequent functions in spontaneous speech. A case in point is the defining function. This function is present in the formulaic opening of oral stories intended for young children, e.g.

(2) once upon a time there was a silly old monster WHO liked to drink pink lemonade. (de Avila, LAS-1)

This, however, is not the first function reported for the relative clause in speech. Bloom, Lahey, Hood, Lifter & Fiess (1980) indicate that "object specification" emerges earliest, e.g.

(3) the man WHO fixes the door. (Bloom et al. 1980: 245)

An important consideration in accounting for the relative rarity of the defining function is a transparent alternative which persists throughout life. This is simply a separate clause. The examples in (4) illustrate the alternatives from a controlled retelling of a newsstory by adolescents:

(4) a. (the story was) about this lady. SHE was reading the Bible and then she fell asleep. (LD17fG2+)

b. it was about a - a lady WHO was sleeping on (=in) her house... (CR17mG1AOA12)

The nonrestrictive relative clause has similar discourse properties. Note the examples below.

(5) a. ... on the left side is our washroom, WHICH I feel is small because there's not enough room to put a ironing board in. (FL17fG2)

b. ... then comes the den. IT has a big glass sliding door to the backyard. (AG17fG3)

The defining relative clause awaits development of orienta- tion in narrative and other discourse genres (cf. Peterson & McCabe 1983). In early stages of discourse development, orienting stative clauses, which create the conditions for using the defining relative clause are rare. Consequently, we find non-mature uses of and (then) at these early stages, as in:

(6) once upon a time it was a boy. AND THEN the witch the - the boy he was uh taking it back ... (RT4;6mG2)

In contrast, (7) below is typical of the lengths JR and other preadolescents will go to present stative information about new referents which interest them, regardless of the cost in referencial clarity. Note occurence of a defining relative clause introduced by that, and the delay of and then until at least the second narrative clause, as in the adult discourse model.

(7) ... and then there's some guys, they're- they'rethe Riffs, there's the - he's a sissy guy he didn't like 'im and his - the guy THAT was up there. His name was Cyrus and he shot him pum! AND THEN everybody started going all nuts... (JR12mG2)

(means: There's some guys called the Riffs. And one of them's a sissy guy. He didn't like the guy that was up there, whose name was Cyrus. And the sissy guy shot Cyrus, and then...)

The discussion so far suggests that recognition of the adult function of both the defining relative clause and the and (then) clause awaits development of the narrative to the point where newly introduced characters are directly followed by stative descriptive clauses. This common feature of mature narrative serves to orient the listener toward the significance of the new character for the further evolution of the situation described in the narrative, and creates the context for the use of the defining relative clause.

The nonrestrictive which clause appears to reflect the further extension of the relative clause to mark clauses which neither specify nor define, but contain descriptive and/or evaluative information. Consider the following:

(8) a. ... Mary's been talking about going to law school which she's afraid would be difficult after all these years. (Greene 1977: 57)

b. My father is an excellent cook, which few men of his generation enjoy doing. (op cit: 131)

c. ... we went by car which my husband wanted to fly (op cit: 131ff)

Greene (1977), in a study of which clauses among Detroit middle class monolingual English speakers, notes that nonrestrictive which may range in the scope of what it relativizes from the immediately preceding NP

through the predicate phrase to the entire sentence. (8)a. illustrates with variation in scope between "law school" and "going to law school" as the head of the which clause. (8)b shows a crucial extension of the head of the which clause to an implication of the preceding clause (i.e. "my father cooks") rather than a grammatical constituent. This ultimately non-syntactic property of the which clause has the syntactic effect of freeing the which clause from requiring a gap representing the relativized constituent. As a result, the which clause may take a canonical shape. This is illustrated in examples like (8)c.

It is interesting to note that what looks like a primitive syntactic form, i.e. a canonical relative clause, is actually a sophisticated semantic device. If it were simply "additive", the function assigned to and by Bloom et al (p.243ff) as the earliest emerging connective observed, its relatively late emergence would be quite unclear. However, the previous discussion suggests that which is not simply additive, but may signal the listener to recognize a proposition implied in the preceding clause.

Acquisition of this function of the which clause depends crucially on learners being able to recognize pragmatic implications of clauses commented on by which clauses. The social experience necessary for this recognition is consistent with the late age of emergence.

We turn now to the subordinate though clause. S&W account for the relative order of acquisition of various subordinators in terms of their semantic complexity. While their notion of semantic complexity seems successful in explaining why adult-like comprehension of though clauses emerges later than because clauses, also studied by them - indeed in ELA because clauses emerge in speech at least ten years earlier than though clauses according to our observations - that notion is not sufficient to account for the late emergence of though clauses in discourse. For example, it does not distinguish the though clause from either the but clause, which emerges in early childhood (cf. Bloom et al 1980: 244ff), or clause-final though, which is already in evidence in preadolescence (cf. Wald 1983).

Now consider the following two sentences:

(9) a. even though it doesn't have a tail it's still a monkey.

b. it doesn't have a tail but it's still a monkey.

According to Scholnick & Wing's characterization of although clauses, mature interpretation requires the comprehender to respond that the speaker of (9)a believes both clauses are true and further, that most monkeys have tails. This is also true of mature interpretation of (9)b., and yet (9)b. presents a sequence which is already quite common in preadolescence, indeed in early childhood. It therefore remains far from clear what delays the use and even the comprehension of structures like (9)a until a relatively late age.

While the semantic difference between (9)a and (9)b remains problematic, the syntactic differences are quite clear. As (10) below illustrates, clause reversal of (9)a does not disturb cohesion or semantic interpretation of the clauses, a property typical of adverbial clauses. However, reversal of (9)b results in incoherence.

(10) a. it's still a monkey even though it doesn't have a tail.

b. '' but it's still a monkey (,/.?) it doesn't have a tail.
There is some evidence that the reversal property of THO clauses does play a role in the acquisition of these clauses, although not necessarily the most important one. Briefly, the argument is that if the though and its "still" (i.e. main) clause have different subjects but one of these clauses has the same subject as the clause immediately to the left of it, then a well-known rule of left-topic continuity should favor whichever clause of the adversative pair allows that continuity. If this were the "still" clause, then the second clause could be marked with even though, but not with but.

This hypothesis was tested indirectly by selecting all clause pairs involving a though clause in which: 1. the though clause was second (since this is the situation equivalent to having the "still" clause first); 2. there was a switch of subjects between the main clause and the though clause.

A total of 30 though clauses was available in the data. Of these only 11 fulfilled the first condition of though clause second. This immediately indicates that, on the whole, position is not the most crucial factor in selection of the though clause over the but clause. It also suggests that postposed though clauses are in some way "special", though not necessarily retarded in development.

Despite the rarity of postposed though clauses in the samples of spontaneous speech, when the effect of subject switching is tested, a striking result is obtained. This is seen in Table 3 below.

	Under 20	Over 20	
switch sbj	4	0	
same sbj	2	5	$x^2 = 2.75$, $p < 0.1$

Table 3. Percentage of X though Y clauses according to coreference of subjects of X and Y (N=11).

5. Relevance to bilingualism. Among theories emphasizing transfer, the role of "positive transfer" in second language acquisition is prominent. Snow & Hofnagel-Hohle (1978), Oyama (1982), Cummins (1981) are among the scholars who propose that in some respects, older speakers, as more experienced language learners, are faster learners than children, when it comes to discovering the uses of meaningful elements in the second language. This is reflected in the rate at which older second language learners approach the adult model. Although rate of acquisition among adults has been tied to motivational and social factors by scholars such as Dittmar (1978) and Schumann (1978), the syntactic devices I have discussed above provide evidence for the faster rate of acquisition of meaningful elements beyond the morphological level by speakers older than preadolescents. Consider, for example, that 32 of the 46 preadolescents are fluent English speakers with the same morphological development as children in most monolingual English communities at their age. Yet, none of them produced a though or which clause. It is all the more striking, then, that both of these devices are evident among speakers who arrived in

the community at the end of preadolescence and have lived there for no more than five years, e.g.

(11) a. even though when I went to junior high school, I still visit his class. (JS16mG1AOA12)
(means: even though he hasn't been my teacher since I...)
b. Danny and Alicia were going out together which George the younger brother didn't know about the relationship between his brother and Alicia. (RF17mG1AOA12)

Example (11)a is interesting because, despite the ill-formedness of the utterance, the use of even though is semantically accurate, including the correlative use of still in the main clause. The semantic accuracy is even more impressive alongside the following:

(12) n if - even though if I don't finish these contracts, I'll just yk take 'em home. (JA16mG2)

JA is a virtually monolingual English speaker. Ex (12) is one of the three even though clauses produced by him in a recording session 10 months after he had been last recorded. In four hours of earlier recording he never used a though clause. He appears to have been acquiring though clauses in the interim. The other two examples were semantically accurate.

The Mexican American Spanish analogue of the though clause is the anque clause. It is observed in adolescence and even younger. However, it is not strictly analogous since anque only translates even though when introducing an indicative clause. When introducing a subjunctive clause it translates even if.

While study remains to be done in determining how and when anque is acquired productively in Spanish discourse, it is evident that by adolescence transfer from Spanish may facilitate acqui- sition of even though by identifying its function with ANQUE + indicative.

The relatively fast rate of acquisition of which clauses by adolescent second language learners is even more striking, since in this case there is no close Spanish analogue to the which clause. Thus, (13) below is one of several examples of the use of which clauses in codeswitching contexts by a fluent codeswitcher who also favors the use of which clauses.

(13) le digo sí le digo, pero le dieron hasta ganas de llorar, which is good yk because I know she learned something. (PV50mG2)
(= I told her yeah, I said, but they even made her want to cry, which...)

As far as is known, the which clause is common to all American English speech communities and shows no class bias. Nevertheless, both the predicate relativizing and canonical uses of which clauses are stigmatized in publishable writing, and considered "vulgar" by prescriptive grammarians (cf. Poutsma 1916: 969 cited by Greene 1977, Jespersen 1928: 111). Thus, as opposed to the though clause, the case is strong that it is learned directly from exposure to nonstandard speech, and represents a case of faster language learning by adolescents without obvious transfer from the first language.

To conclude, then, which and though clauses provide evidence that in some respects adolescents are faster language learners than

preadolescents. Problems remain in accounting for this advantage to older second language learners with respect to the extent to which cognitive vs. stylistic factors are involved in the late age of emergence of these devices. This remains to further discovery of the discourse functions which these devices serve, and whether or not there are earlier emerging devices which serve the same or similar functions in discourse. The least that can be said at this point is that the relatively rapid rate of acquisition of these devices by adolescents suggests that speakers use peers as models for learning to speak. Thus, we would not expect preadolescents to acquire these devices productively, since their age-mates, no matter how fluent, do not use them. But we would expect them to develop relatively rapidly among adolescents and adults even if they do not have equivalents in the first language, as long as they use more fluent peers as models.

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